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By Edgar Holden.

Harper's  
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## A CRUISE ON THE "SASSACUS."

By Edgar Holden.



THE COLLISION.

THE most inexplicable interruption of plan and changes of destination attended the outset of the career of the United States steamer *S—*. An instance of this, and the only one of sufficient interest to merit record, resulted in her participation in a week of events most interesting and exciting.

These have been jotted down, for though three years of blockade may have rendered them not unusual, yet their minutæ seem rarely to find access to the public eye.

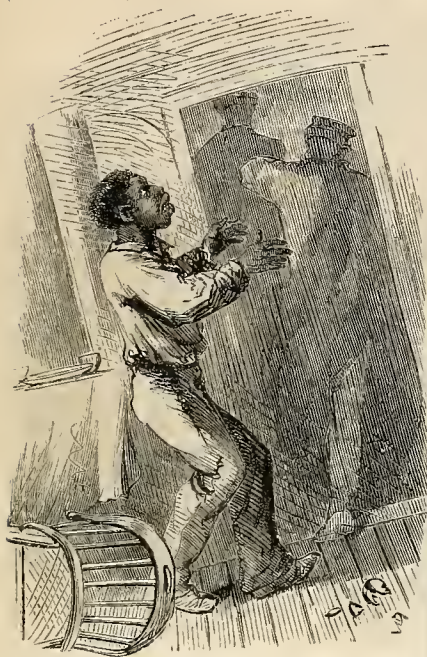
On the morning of the 3d of December, '63, the *S—* left Washington, bound for New Orleans, having an iron-clad in tow. Farewells had been spoken, and the departure was looked upon as the beginning of a long cruise. There were the usual regrets and longing glances cast backward toward the receding city; and neither the beauty of the weather nor a bracing, invigorating breeze, could wholly dispel anxiety as to the uncertain future. Toward evening the clouds began to gather, and an increasing mistiness of the atmosphere gave indications of a storm. When darkness settled down, however, it had become clearer, and the full moon gave a dim outline to shore and water, distinct enough to preclude the necessity for anchoring. We were sitting after supper canvassing our prospects, and arguing upon various subjects—among other things, what a fine time we should have if, by accident, we should run ashore and the iron-clad run into us.

Various experiences were given to show the case with which such a monster could go completely through a wooden ship, the great momentum, etc., and an argument was even started as to how far she would probably get into the ward-room before we could get out; as to the depth of water, too, the width of the river, and various interesting concomitants of escape from a sinking ship; when suddenly, as if a thunder-bolt had struck, there came a crash, a heavy lurch, a shiver of the whole ship—and, quicker than words can describe it, away went chairs, plates, and table, and every one vanished through the door and up the ladder. Yet not every one either, for a ward-room boy, simultaneously with the noise and concussion, had tumbled against a stanchion, and, in spite of the emergency and apparently imminent peril, it was most laughable to see his horror-stricken, despairing countenance, as, with eyes turned upward, round and white as saucers, and knees knocking together, he ejaculated, "Oh! we're gone!" On deck all was at first black as Erebus. There was running hither and thither; cries for help from the water; flashing of lanterns and loud shouts of command. The fact that we were still afloat was at once apparent, but the probabilities of remaining so were a question. The lights of the iron-clad showed her to be on our quarter, and not in contact with us; but a black object, like a phantom-ship, under full sail, was slowly drifting astern, and by the glimmer



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"OH! WE'RE GONE!"

of lights on her deck all doubts as to the nature at least of our disaster began to resolve. Something or other had plainly run into us, and it was not our friend the iron-clad. As soon as the crash of collision was heard her engines had been stopped, her helm put hard aport, and she had sheered off, almost grazing our quarter. A boat was instantly lowered in answer to the cry for help which had appeared to come from the water, as well as to render assistance, if need be, to the other colliding ship. In this boat, with the sailing-master, went the surgeon, to look out for those who might perchance be wounded. Meantime, by the aid of half a dozen lights and considerable trouble, an approximate idea of our own injury was arrived at.

The ship had struck the *S—* forward of the wheel-house on the port side, and carried away nearly the whole of it, as well as apparently a part of the wheel itself. But more, and worse than all, five or six men were missing. The pumps were sounded as soon as possible, with the result of assuring us that the ship's hull was uninjured; not an inch of water was making. As quiet was now restored, the first thought perhaps to many was the natural one, after the discussion of the early part of the evening—"This is the end of *this* cruise, at any rate!" The next, and more humane one, was of anxiety for our poor fellows who must have been lost overboard.

As one boat's crew was away, the names and even the number of the missing ones could not at once be ascertained; and the return of the absent boat was awaited with deep interest.

Upon boarding the other vessel, which had soon drifted out of sight in the darkness, she was found to be the *W—*, a brig out of Boston, with lumber, bound for Washington. Her captain was found in a state of great nervous trepidation, either from imminent danger of going down—as he at once said his ship was leaking—or from anticipation of being severely handled for running into a man-of-war. Whatever may have been the cause, he shook as with an ague. We soon had reason, however, to form a good opinion of him; for though having but few men, and knowing his own ship to be badly injured, perhaps sinking, he had instantly lowered his boat as the same cry we had heard reached his ears, and had succeeded in picking up two of our missing men.

These two had been found together, both wounded by the wheel, which had struck them as they fell—one, who could swim, heroically holding up his companion, who could not, till assistance should arrive. The injury received by the brig was rather severe, and amounted to having a hole stove through her port bow, about ten feet in length by three or four in breadth, smashing several bunks, and rather unceremoniously dislodging their occupants. In this nice little aperture were stowed about a dozen square feet of our iron sheathing and a good part of our wheel and wheel-house. Farther aft than this were a few other evidences of collision of a similar nature as well as torn rigging, dislodged lumber, etc. The captain and mate, upon going below with our officers, surveyed the major opening through which the outside darkness was visible with rueful countenances, but of course denied any fault in the matter on their part, and even talked of damages of another nature to be recovered by a court. The result of the investigation and inquiry was a conviction that the brig had been recklessly steered across the *S—*'s hawse under a mistaken idea as to distance, and suddenly, when too late, the helm had been put hard down. She was found to be not leaking badly, and was therefore left with no misgivings as to her sinking. The two wounded and half-drowned men were properly cared for and taken back to the *S—*. The other missing men were never found or heard of, and must have been killed outright by our powerful wheels.

It was impossible of course for us now to proceed, and a report was made of the extent of our injury to the commander of the iron-clad. As it happened a commodore was on board, who gave orders for us to return to Washington, and took the responsibility of proceeding in the iron-clad without escort to Fortress Monroe.

Upon that accident depended the events to be narrated, for the circumstances of war wait for no repairs, and another ship supplied our place at New Orleans. Weeks passed, and with completion of repairs came most agreeable orders for a cruise, on what is called the outer blockade, a sort of independent search for blockade-runners, any where between two or more defined points. In the latter part of January we



EFFECT OF THE COLLISION ON THE BRIG.

joined the North Atlantic Squadron, and at Norfolk completed such preparations as were necessary for the cruise, such as sending down topmasts and crow's nests, and lightening ship to some extent of superfluous ammunition.

With the most pleasing confidence in the unsurpassed speed of the *S*— it will surely not be wondered at that every day's delay seemed most irksome. We were anxious to try her to advantage behind the swiftest of the blockade-breakers, and when upon leaving Norfolk she tried a run of fifteen or twenty miles for the benefit of the admiral, and accomplished the distance at the rate of fourteen and a half knots an hour, the eagerness for active service increased.

On the morning of the 28th we steamed seaward. Does any one whose days are filled with the anxieties of business or the allurements of pleasure ever wonder how the hours pass on a cruiser, where the monotony of the most routine of all routines reigns for days together? The most unimportant and trivial subjects excite debate, the most worn and threadbare remarks on more than threadbare past events spice the meals and fill up the chinks. The past experience of most of our officers afforded vivid examples of such a life, and though instead of an inside blockade we were to try now for the first time an outside and freer one, yet we could not but anticipate a good deal more of the same sort of monotony.

Yet we were destined to most agreeable disappointment. Scarcely were twenty-four hours

passed ere a sail was made and we gave chase. There was no black smoke to mark her as a blockade-runner, but all sails were to be overhauled without distinction. It proved to be merely a schooner heavily laden but having correct papers.

Another and another were chased with the same result, then a steam transport filled with our own soldiers, and the next day several craft of various description. But on the morning of the third day out, having arrived upon the appointed cruising ground, a thin curl of dark smoke was descried upon the horizon.

Down went the helm, around came the ship's prow. Four bells!\* and we were off for the anticipated prize. The wind blew freshly, dead ahead, and the white-capped waves tossed their spray over our bows, but so low were we in the water that it hindered us but little. An hour passed and yet another, and the wheel-houses and upper deck of the chase were above the horizon. The distance between us, at first about twelve miles, had now decreased by three, but a thin mist filled the atmosphere and was slowly settling upon the whole sea. Speculations as to whether the chase were a prize or one of our own steamers had been all along rife, but her actions began to convince us. Evidently a swift steamer, the foam under her paddle-wheels, which could plainly be seen by a glass, as well as the increased volume of smoke from her fires, evidenced a desire to escape. Interest increased, and repeatedly were glasses leveled to measure

\* Ahead fast—to the engineers.





THE CHASE THROUGH THE FOG.

the advantage we were gaining. Impatience at the settling fog began to add fears that she might be hidden before we could overtake her. While the interest was the warmest and impatience most irritating, and the fog becoming more and more dense, some part of our machinery began to heat and the wheels to move more slowly. It was most provoking. Oil was useless, and constant streams of cold water would barely allow a moderate rate of speed. Fortunately a change of course on the part of the chase, by altering the effect of the waves upon us, relieved the strain upon the heating parts, and again we were under full headway. Still gaining slowly but steadily upon it, the dim mass ahead loomed up to us through the fog.

A heavier bank than usual had accumulated upon her port side, and suddenly changing her course full three points, she plunged into it out of sight. This manœuvre seemed to settle all doubts as to her loyalty, but to increase those of her capture.

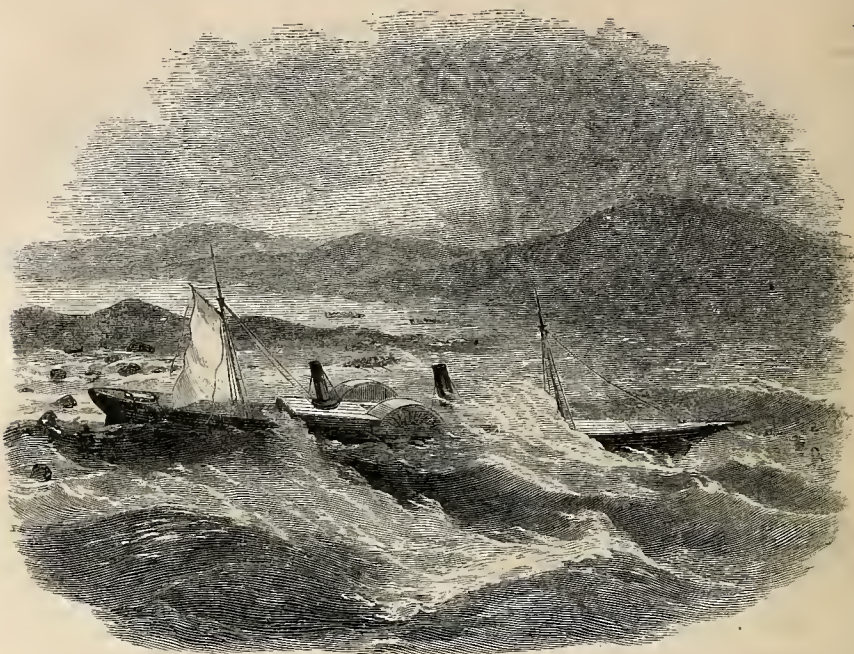
Still we kept the same course, reasoning, as it proved correctly, that once in the fog she would resume her original course, and trust to our having changed when she did. In less than five minutes the fog thinned, and there she was, still ahead, though a little on our port bow, but nearer.

It was estimated that now hardly three miles were between us, and at half past two o'clock in the afternoon a 100-pounder Parrott rifle was trained on her, and a shot fell just outside the foam of her wheels. Not a signal was shown, nor a sign of slackening speed returned, and in ten minutes the order was given, "Fire to hit." Another shot was fired, and anxiously we watch-

ed it, a little black speck in the air, as, splendidly in line, it struck apparently into her quarter. Colors were now flown from her peak, but the mist was too thick to enable us to read them, and still she kept her speed. Another shot and another whistled after her, and a flash from one of her stern guns sent back reply. Interest had now become excitement; every pound of steam was crowded on to urge us forward. The gong sounded to quarters. Our whole battery was cleared for action, and every preparation made for the fight.

Was it the *Alabama* or *Florida*? What a chance for distinction to overtake and capture one of those noted pirates! The distance now rapidly diminished, and firing ceased; not a sound save the plashing wheels and rushing waters broke the stillness. Eagerness for the fight yet anxiety as to its result filled every heart. We were prepared for no disappointment aside from those of battle; and when we neared and could distinguish every part of the chase, and read the rammers still flying at her peak, and comparing their interpretation with the appearance of the ship, we were convinced that it was indeed one of our own steamers, imagination can alone conceive the change in the mind of all from excitement to indignation.

It would be as impolitic as useless to add more: we turned about and steamed again for our station. Weeks afterward we heard from those who were on board that steamer that the reasons for her not having come to after the first fire were considerably at variance. One story was that we were taken for a new Anglo-Rebel ram that was expected; another, that the captain was in great haste.



BLOCKADE-RUNNER "WILD DAYRELL" ASHORE.

Whatever may have been the reason it resulted in drawing the *S—* from her station, so that on her return, at about dawn of day, another but thicker and blacker smoke was in sight, in toward the shore, about off Stump Inlet. Not only this, but a long, low hull, with raking masts and smoke-stack, lay below the smoke full in sight. Swiftly, like a hawk on its prey, the *S—* sped toward her. Scarcely six miles away, clearly visible as she was to us, almost, indeed, within range of our guns, yet she tried to escape. Too close, however, inshore, under which her pilot had attempted to crawl along in the dusk past the innermost blockaders, she struck, and even then the utmost efforts were quickly made to save her. A kedge was led out from her quarter, hales on bales of goods were thrown overboard with almost incredible rapidity, but they had miscalculated our speed and draught. Ere more than the first effort could be made we were within range, and a shot whistled over their heads. Helter-skelter ran every one for the boats, and leaving every thing as it stood, with the engines still moving, they fled precipitately. A narrow creek led inland, and with all dispatch they pulled up into it and disappeared. One or two shots from a rifled howitzer were fired ahead of the flying boats; but no heed was given, and so short was the time ere a bend in the creek had hidden them from view that a more effective and telling reminder could not be sent. The surf dashed against her sides and at times completely washed her decks. Clouds of smoke

and steam poured from her, mingling with the spray. It seemed certain that the rebels must have set her on fire, great as was their haste. Quick were the willing hands that lowered our boats almost before the anchor touched the bottom, but it was a perilous task to attempt through such a line of surf to pull boats never huilt or intended for the work. The wind was howling freshly, and every moment seemed to increase the swell and break of the waves around and over the stranded ship. Nor was this all. Even were the ship itself not on fire, we knew full well that every inflammable substance had been thrown under her boilers to increase her steam, and the clouds arising from her looked ominous.

Every moment increased the probability of her blowing up, especially as the blockade-runners have an unpleasant habit of fastening down the safety-valves and putting on the blowers at the moment of abandoning the ship. Every instant was precious, and without a moment's hesitation at the danger of surf or steam, the boats were away and rolling among the breakers ere the last shot fired over the retreating rebels fell in the water beyond them.

Bravely the boats passed the first breakers, and soon tossing against the prize, one and another scrambled from them up the ship's side. The first thought and attention was given to the engines and boilers. The safety-valve was found so securely fastened that the most vigorous efforts failed to relieve it. One may only imagine the sensations of those who were thus so in very



contact with destruction, uncertain whether one, two, or three minutes might not end all in one complete and terrible explosion. While ready hands were thus busy above the boilers, others below were hauling the furious fires or drenching them with water. The peril was imminent beyond expression. Again and again did the brave men apply themselves to the resisting valve till delay, though only measured by seconds, was more than reckless. Yet soon success rewarded exertion, and a scream of escaping steam relieved the tremendous pressure that had been accumulating.

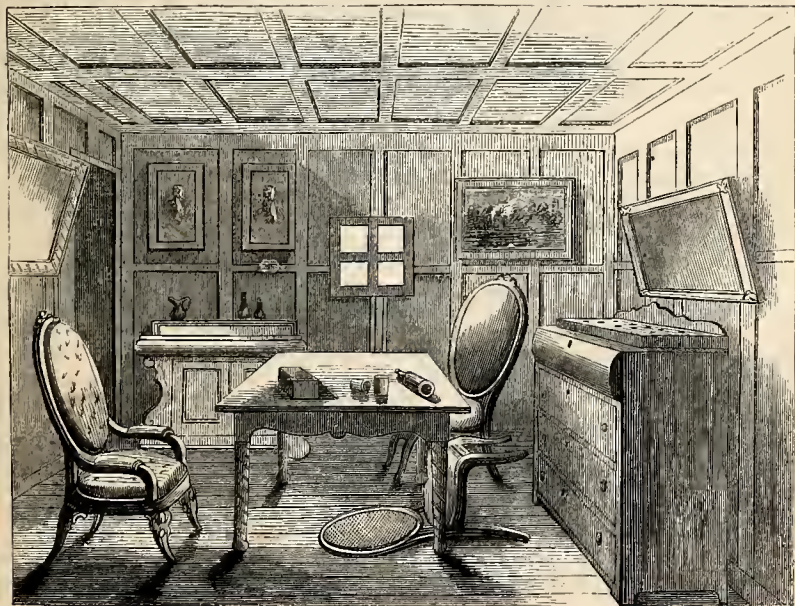
The ship was not on fire, though it was evidently no fault of her former crew; for matches, signal-lights, and all sorts of inflammable materials hastily piled together, but more hastily abandoned, declared their intention. Yet, after all, fire would have given little trouble, for almost every part of the ship from keel to pilot-house was of iron. She was in most filthy condition. Paint bad long since given place to whitewash, and whitewash to the effects of wind and rain. Heavy cases of goods from firms in New York, and of shoes marked as from Lynn, Massachusetts, were lying about the deck, or lifted half upon the rail in the attempt so hurriedly made to lighten ship. In the hold bales of dry goods were still swinging from the whips; while in the cabin all sorts of articles of toilet or apparel, hastily emptied trunks and valises, bottles and glasses, were strewn about the floor. Her log-book showed her to be the *Wild Dayrell*, of whose speed and successful trips to the Confederacy the public had often heard.

She was three days out of Nassau, and sev-

eral times before had been chased by our cruisers, but had proved too fast for them.

Her lading was merchandise of every description, bushels of oranges and barrels of liquor.

The kedge, before spoken of as led out from her quarter, was found to have had a strong but light cable attached, and led to the shaft around which the motion of the engine had tightly wound it. All danger from fire or steam disposed of, attention was turned to continuing the laudable exertions of her former occupants. The tide seemed unfortunately to be falling; for though the surf was still as heavy, yet bare hills of sand began to appear in dangerous proximity to the *S—* herself. To get ashore would have been almost to insure destruction; for every one knew that in twenty-four hours the rebels would have soldiers or a battery down upon the beach; and while they might at first prove little more than an annoyance, proper exertions for getting again afloat would be seriously interfered with. Prudently, therefore, the *S—* retired a little further from the shoals, and again anchored to await the return tide. Meantime a strong hawser was made ready and men set to the task of lightening the prize, beginning with the coal which almost filled her bunkers. Most unfortunately, as is well known, a strong penchant exists in a Jack Tar for whisky, and, as is also pretty generally known, he usually manages to get it by hook or crook if ever placed in its vicinity; the utmost vigilance, moreover, is hardly ever able to avert such an issue. There was no exception in this case. The most trusty men were sent below to stave in every barrel, jug, and jar of intoxicating liquor, and guards were stationed over them;



THE CABIN OF THE "WILD DAYRELL."

but the men seemed to get drunk from the fumes, and as the guards were also soon drunk, it is fair to suppose they were drunk from sympathy.

The coal came up slowly. Those who hauled on the end of the rope somehow always worked under the lee of a bulk-head or wheel-house, and there seemed a tendency of the whole line toward the same point; so that the aftermost man gave place at almost every second pull, and came up to the head of the line. In fact, the strong smell of whisky soon began to direct unmistakable suspicion toward the vicinity, and, in a word, so many men were getting under the influence of liquor that the officers were obliged to get them into the boats and abandon work.

With the rise of the tide another boat put off from the *S—*, with a hawser. It was safely carried through the breakers and made fast to the bow of the prize.

Meantime, as might have been expected, one of the return boats, with her hilarious crew, in attempting to pass the surf was nearly capsized and grounded, tumbling about half a dozen men overboard. This cold bath was most beneficial; they were so far sobered as very sensibly to stay overboard and lay hold of the boat and haul it into deeper water.

When all was ready on the ships, and the tide nearly at its height, both engines were started, the hawser tautened, the prize yielded slowly, very slowly—stopped again, then stuck fast, one long, strong pull and snap! the cable parted in the hawse-hole.

The transfer of a cable under such circumstances is no easy matter, nor is it one of a few moments, and ere another could be made ready the tide was falling. Nothing could therefore be done save to wait another tide, and meantime renewed efforts were made to get the coal out. After the precaution taken to destroy all liquors the work was expected to proceed more successfully.

The wind increased in freshness as dusk began to close around, and it required considerable nerve to look calmly upon the shoals so near us and hear their sullen roar, beating as they were upon an enemy's coast. Yet every thing was kept in readiness for getting underway if the wind should increase too dangerously. All boats were recalled, and no one remained upon the prize. The work on board of her had proceeded more successfully than before, and nearly all the coal had been thrown overboard. About midnight the hawser was again tautened, and though only the stars furnished their feeble light, the *S—* was tasked her utmost to haul that ship from the strand. Again the hawser broke and the effort was given up. Lights now appeared on the shore, and back among the trees several could be seen moving hither and thither. Morning would probably bring the rebels upon us, and it was almost regretted that the steamer had not been at once destroyed. Morning brought no change, however, save that the *Wild Dayrell* was two hun-

dred feet farther on the beach. As the weather was clear and beautiful, and no special necessity apparent for leaving, a third trial was resolved upon.

In accordance with this determination boats and crews were made ready as before, when another actor appeared in the drama. A sail was made out approaching from the direction of the Wilmington fleet.

It proved to be the *F—* man-of-war. She came up, and anchored.

Assistance was volunteered, and almost at the same moment four boats loaded with men and officers put off from her for the prize. The men from the *S—* were already hard at work hoisting coal, tumbling heavy barrels, etc., over the side, guards being as before stationed over all goods of value, the cabin, and its stores. Without any ceremony, or so much as "by your leave," all orders were broken down, and like freebooters the new-comers began lightening ship in a very different manner from the first design. Had the commander of the stranger not made his appearance on the scene at this moment blood would have followed.

Fighting is too nearly allied to displeasure in a sailor's mind to allow much of an interval between a word and a blow, and even the presence of the commanding officer hardly restored order.

He, being senior to the captain of the *S—*, gave orders to desist from work, as it was now apparent upon sounding about her that she never would float again. Orders were also added to save whatever provisions were needed by the crews of either vessel, but to take provisions *only*.

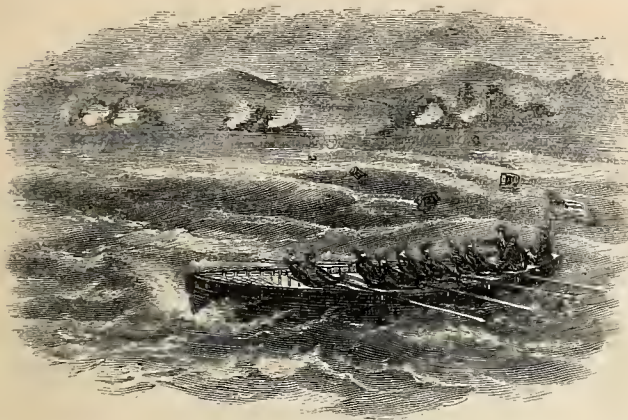
In about two hours goods apparently most bulky had entirely melted away. However comprehensive the word "provisions" may be the large proportion of articles which thus disappeared could hardly be included.

It was most fortunate that not a demijohn of liquor remained after the destruction of the morning, or authority, and even force, would have been of no avail to control so many.

As it was, however, all went along pretty smoothly for nearly half an hour, till suddenly the sharp crack of rifles, and the whiz of a score of bullets overhead, hurried every body in preparation for the destruction. The blue lights and matches were this time more effectually piled together, and every part of the ship insured for complete and simultaneous combustion.

Then came the gauntlet of a quarter of a mile along the beach, from which the firing was now pretty constant. The wind was blowing directly on shore, and as nothing but muskets had yet been fired at us the sound seemed not to have reached the *S—*. The bullets whistled overhead, into the boat's sides, among the oars, and through hats and coats, but not a man had yet fallen. Sturdily the men lay to the oars till the boat fairly flew. It seemed utterly impossible to reach the ship without the loss of





ATTACKED BY SHARP-SHOOTERS.

reached, and with its earliest glimmer "Sail, ho!" was shouted from the mast-head.

A thin, black smoke just dimmed the verge of the horizon, and again four bells started the *S—* in pursuit.

Rapidly at first, because not yet ourselves discovered, we gained upon the stranger, till just as the hull was becoming dimly visible, she seemed to spy us, and for an hour not a rod appeared to have as

many men, and in spite of the peril of the situation we could not but feel a sort of contempt for such poor marksmen. But now they have seen from the ship the little curls of smoke out of the bushes, and an admonition to the rebels to retire is hurled from the hurricane deck—one, two, three howitzer shells burst over or in the infested shelter; and now not a marksman can be seen along the shore. The curling tongues of flame that now shot out from the decks of the *Wild Dayrell* showed that the torch had been faithfully applied; clouds of lurid smoke poured from the holds, and enveloped the whole of her light masts, sails, and rigging.

To insure complete ruin of her engines, and to preclude the remote possibility of her ever serving again either her owners or the rebels, both the *S—* and *F—* took position, and shot after shot was fired through the iron hull. Bursting shells soon tore immense holes in bows and stern, or threw masses of shattered deck and cargo high into the air.

In three hours the anticipated prize lay upon the beach a complete wreck.

Ere the night came again we were off for our outer station; but hours after dark the red light from the still smouldering fire marked to us the spot we had left.

Subsequently we learned that the *F—*, having lain at anchor until the following morning, was attacked from the shore by the rebels, who had brought down a light battery.

Several holes through various parts of the ship, and several killed and wounded, attested their superior skill over the misnamed sharpshooters who had fired upon the boats. It was now the sixth day out, and though at starting the prospect of finding any blockade-runners seemed limited, yet the whole time, thus far, had been filled with the excitement of chase. Every one was willing, therefore, to prophesy that not another one would be seen for a month, and it seemed very probable.

By dawn of day our cruising ground was

yet been gained by the pursuer.

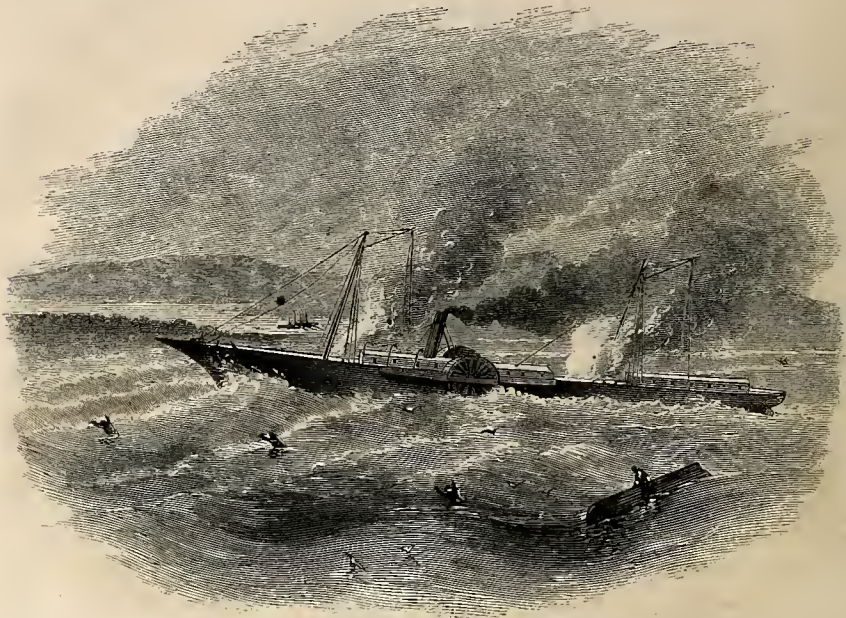
The smoke became thicker and blacker, and had her name been written in gigantic letters upon the cloud it could not have rendered more certain the character of the chase. The sea was smooth as a mill-pond, and only a gentle wind blew over its unruffled surface.

It was splendid weather for speed, and pursuer and pursued made the very most of it. Mile after mile, hour after hour, the chase kept on. The same difficulty with heating machinery occurred as before, and the same means were tried to obviate it.

More and more distinct grew the stranger, though scarcely a mile an hour diminished the distance between us. The white foam could be faintly distinguished under her paddle-wheels at the end of the sixth hour, but gradually, as if to run for some port, she had changed her course shoreward, and unless greater speed could be attained might yet escape or be stranded and destroyed. Every fire was cleaned, and every pound of steam that the boilers would bear was crowded on. We were now moving at the rate of sixteen miles an hour. The smoke-stack



THE ADMONITION.



THEY RUN HER ASHORE, SET HER ON FIRE, AND ESCAPED.

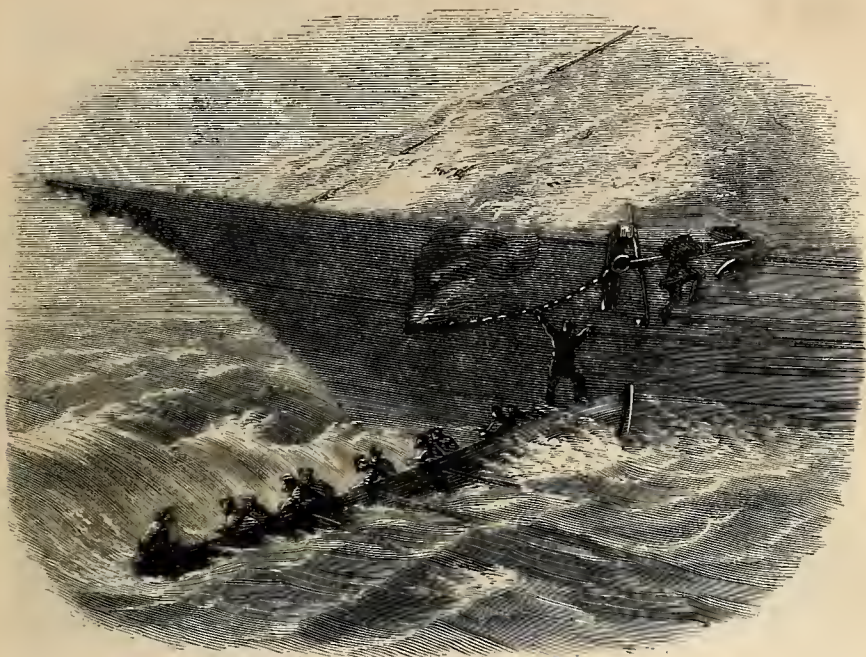
was gradually turning brown from the heat, and flakes of paint peeled off and fell upon the deck. So intensely hot did it become that one could not stand within six feet of it, and men were stationed with hose and buckets of water in order to quench the first appearance of flame in the deck through which it passed. Bales of goods began to float past us. They were lightening ship. "Land, ho!" came from the mast-head look-out, and far away a low dark border to the horizon could be seen with a glass. Oh for ten miles more sea-room or another revolution of our wheels! Yet, after all, she will be overtaken ere she can reach the shore; for the distance is now barely three miles between us, and there are yet twelve miles to run. There was no time for a mathematical calculation as to how likely a steamer gaining on another scarcely two miles an hour, and both moving at such speed, would be to overtake her in a run of twelve miles; there seemed no time for any thing in the excitement of the chase, though the very minutes appeared hours. The shore grew bolder and plainly visible even without a glass.

The 100-pounder rifle could carry a message, and it was called in requisition for the purpose. A shell was fired. It rose high in the air, and, like a speck, could be seen on its course till a little puff of smoke took its place directly over the flying vessel. No notice was taken save apparently to hasten her flight. Another followed, and another swept her decks; but the running hither and yon of the excited crew and the cool indifference of the man at her wheel were the only results.

It was now evident that she would succeed in stranding, and most probably be set on fire. The water was shoaling rapidly, and the leadman's song changed at every cast of the lead, till "by the mark five" had become "deep four," and it was time to slacken speed. Another cast of the lead, and "by the mark three" gave new cause for anxiety. "Stop her!" "Back her!" were the orders of almost the same breath; but the cast still gave three fathoms.

The chase struck hard and strong ahead of us, going at full speed. Simultaneous with the shock her boats, full of men, touched the breakers, and one capsized. Without regard for the men struggling in the water, the other boats pulled swiftly through the surf and up one of the numerous inlets which cut the coast, and across which, fortunately for them, the ship had stranded. The *S—*'s boats, fully manned and armed, were also in the water ere the last man had left the prize's decks. Yet before the intervening space could be crossed the catastrophe we had feared was come about. A dozen streams of smoke were beginning to creep lazily upward from different parts of the ship, and every moment increased in volume. She was on fire. The former experience with the safety-valve of the *Wild Dayrell* rendered a similar hazardous exposure more to be dreaded; especially since a tremendous pressure of steam was evidenced by the almost incredible velocity of her revolving wheels, as well as the complete absence of any appearance of steam above decks. Yet not a moment was given to hesitation. As the first boat touched the ship's side officers and men jumped aboard. Meantime another boat





AS THE BOAT TOUCHED THEY JUMPED ABOARD.

had put off from the *S—* to resene, if possible, those who were still struggling among the breakers.

The utmost exertions, and a venturing close upon the reef although the boat was most unsuited to any such work, were unsuccessful in reseuing more than one man.

He, who proved to have been the pursuer of the ship, was found clinging to the capsized boat, and had the additional advantage of a life-preserver round his body. Sick and almost dead from exhaustion and swallowing so much salt-water, he was hauled on board the *S—* and reserved for future use. Arrived on the deck of the burning steamer the first thought and effort was directed toward the engine-room, and in a moment more the escaping steam relieved all anxiety from that quarter. The next and perhaps simultaneous one was for the fire. Tarpaulins were covered over every hatch, and the ship's buckets, quickly found, were soon employed to pour a constant stream of water upon them. This was not enough, the blackness of the smoke, and the strong odor of turpentine,

showed that it was no ordinary fire raging below. A small fire-engine was sent from the *S—*, and for several minutes the progress of the workers was viewed with deep interest. The smoke seemed to grow still blacker, and red tongues of flame came at intervals from the crevices to mingle with it. Every moment increased the peril, for traces of ammunition on deck showed what might be the character of the cargo below, and the thought that a single spark in the magazine might at any instant blow ship and men to atoms made the blood run cold. This increase of flame, however, was but the last flaring of the candle, and very soon scarcely a



THE PURSER.



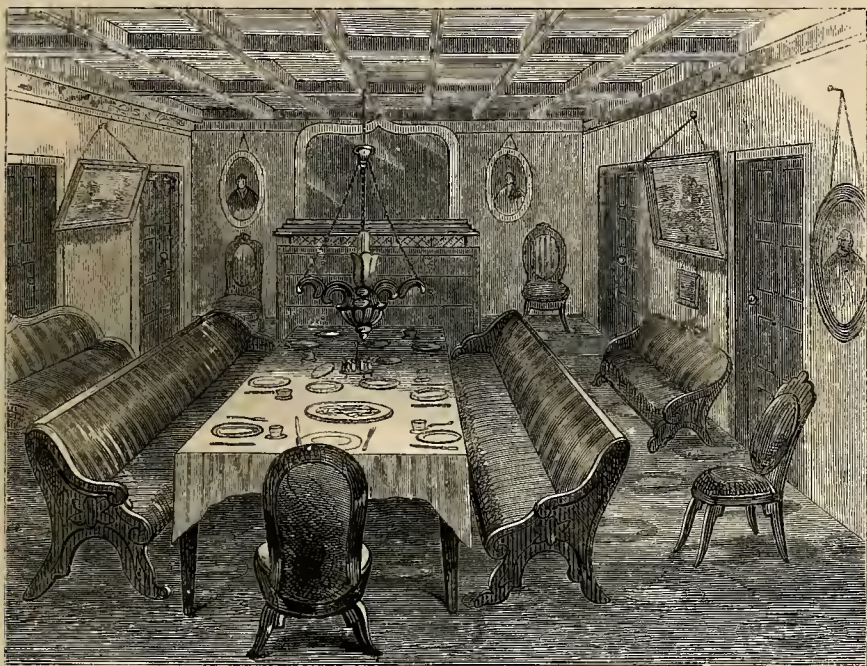
PUTTING OUT THE FIRE.

trace of smoke or fire rose from the deck. The water was rising every moment, and the most sanguine hopes were entertained of getting the ship again afloat. A hawser was led from the *S—* to her, and the short interval before high-tide was filled up with soundings and preparation for a long strong pull. The steamer proved to be the *Nutfield*, perfectly new, and, as her papers showed, laden with arms and stores for the Confederate Government. She had been chased the day before, and escaped only to find herself at night in the very midst of the inside blockaders off Wilmington. Eluding these and again putting straight to sea, daylight had brought her within range of our watchful look-outs, and the result was before us. In a short time various points in the deck were found to be getting hot, and an ominous hollow sound under the foot-steps indicated the activity of the flames below. Holes were cut where the deck was hottest, and streams of water poured down with the little fire-engine before mentioned. In the cabin of the prize, which was most luxuriantly furnished, stood the breakfast-table hastily abandoned. A lavish expenditure of turpentine had soaked every thing both of food and furniture, but the fire had fortunately failed to take, and nothing appeared injured. The same profusion of wearing apparel was strewn about the cabin as on the *Wild Dayrell*, and the same evidence of hasty abandonment were visible in the state-rooms. It was, however, now high-tide, and inspection of cabin and cargo was changed for active exertion to save the ship.

The engines of both steamers were started, the cable tautened, the prize moved, and a cheer was given as she seemed to be afloat, but the wind, which had increased, was rapidly forcing the *S—* over upon a neighboring shoal, and with a terrible shock she struck.

Quick as lightning the cable was cut, and just in time the powerful wheels launched the ship ahead upon the swell, and once more in deeper water. It was over, and every one breathed freer. There was no alternative now but to wait once more for the tide, and fill the interval by lightening the beached ship of part of her cargo. Cases of muskets, rifles, and swords were passed up from the after hold, where alone the fire had been entirely quelled, and being too valuable to be thrown overboard were transferred to the hold of the *S—*. About forty cases had been started before night came, so that upon the midnight tide hopes were entertained that she might be made to float. Another hawser was stretched before dusk, and every thing made ready, but fortune seemed against us. The tide rose, the engines were started, the cable tautened, strained, and broke. It was provoking; but it was determined on the following day to endeavor at least to save part of the most valuable cargo. In accordance with this plan men were set to work at daylight. Cases of needles, hardware of every sort, saddles, bridles, gun-tackles, machinery in order and out of order, writing paper in bales upon bales, dry goods, and fancy articles, were piled in one solid mass from upper deck to keelson.





CABIN OF THE "NUTFIELD."

It was found advisable to save the arms in preference to all else; and while the work was going on various were the exclamations of congratulation at having within three days stranded two swift blockade-runners, and not a few that the *F*—, which had interfered before, must now be far away, when lo! a steamer rapidly approached. It was she! Consternation and anxiety lest the former scenes should be repeated rendered the instant order from the *S*— to burn the prize a most agreeable one. It seemed a hard fate for a ship so beautiful in model and finish, built and equipped, as she evidently had

been, at an utter disregard of all expense; yet the necessity for her destruction was apparent, and every preparation was hastily made.

The bodies of the drowned men lay upon the shore close by the ship, in which they had perhaps most hopefully set out from home; and one, just on the edge of the surf, lay with white face exposed to the burning sun, and his hands were folded across his breast as if in sleep. The sight was a sad one, but other scenes soon called away all unpleasant reflections. Every body was now in the boats, and the fires from every part of the ill-fated ship were again springing forth.

The new-comer once more took position with the *S*—, and opened fire of shot and shell; and soon, warped by heat and riddled with shot, the iron hull of the blockade-runner lay before us a shapeless wreck. One of the poor fellows lying upon the beach was discovered to be still alive, and occasionally raised himself weakly upon his arm and waved his handkerchief for help. He lay upon the outline of surf, and at times the icy



THE DROWNED.

water would break completely over him. What could be done? Not a boat in our possession would pass and repass the rolling breakers to the spot in safety, and to capsize was merely to leave our own men in the same pitiable condition. He was too weak to cling to a line, and no plan for his relief was deemed prudent, even though the only alternative was to leave him to die. The experience with the *Wild Day-rell* warned against

delay; and even without it, the sudden appearance at this juncture of a troop of rebels upon a distant road, casting up clouds of dust as they dashed along, decided the apparently dreadful alternative to be as justifiable as necessary.

Leaving the *F*— still at anchor, once more was the *S*—'s prow turned seaward.

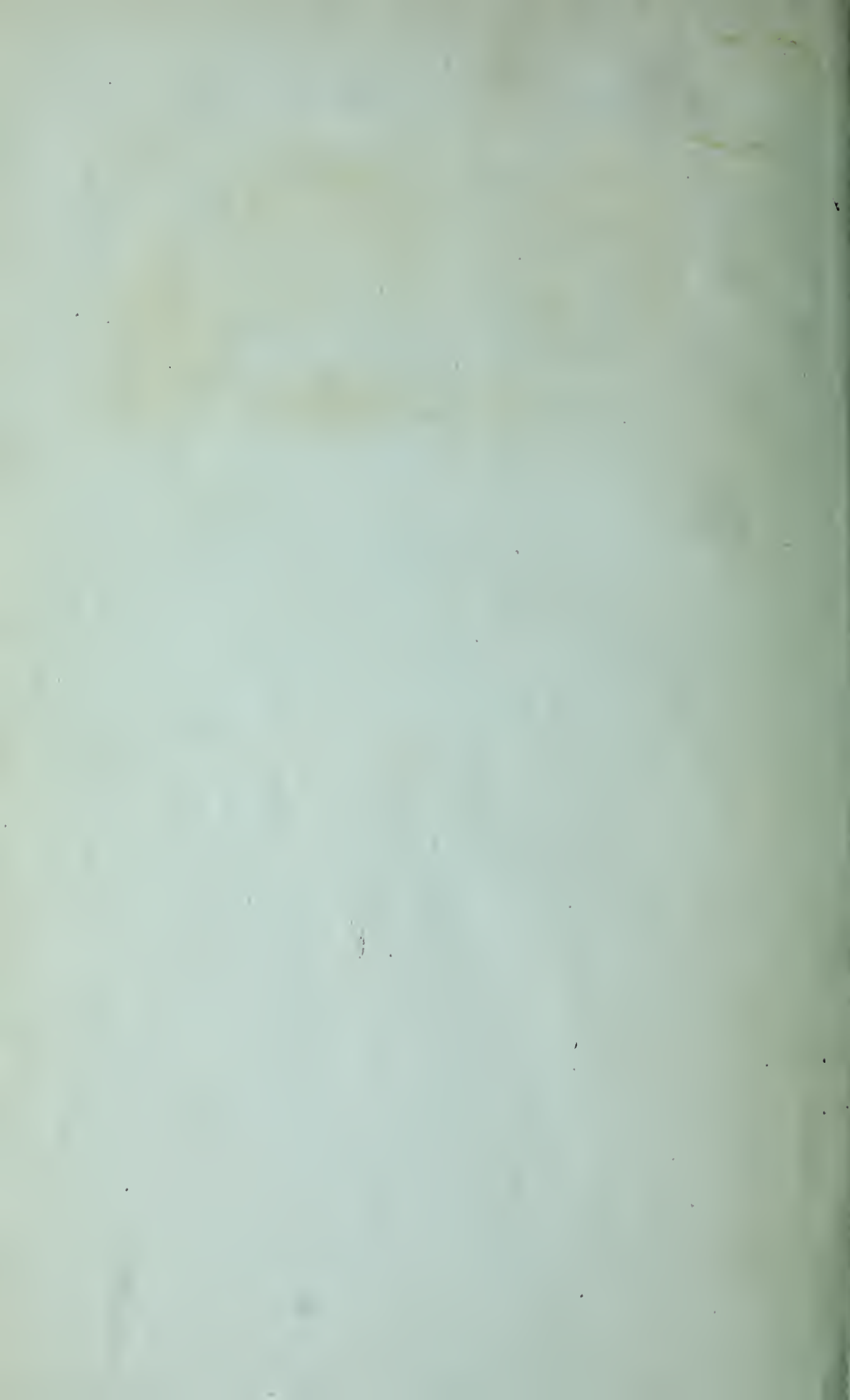
The prisoner we had taken stated that, in the case of the *Nutfield*, owners and crew had been most sanguine of making many a successful trip, and that her cargo was valued at half a million of dollars. During her flight from the *S*—



ABANDONED.

several rifled guns and tons of lead had been thrown overboard, as well as the cases that had floated past us. Our prisoner, too, showed pretty conclusively by his conversation that his sympathies were with our enemies, and gratitude for saving his life seemed to be the last and least of all his thoughts. Opportunity soon occurred of transferring him to a prison on shore, for a few days virtually ended the cruise on the outer blockade. Upon returning to Beaufort for coal orders were found awaiting us to the Sounds of North Carolina, and, as the event proved, to battle.







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